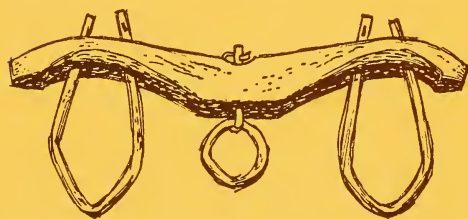


THE LINCOLN MIGRATION
FROM
KENTUCKY TO INDIANA
1816

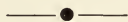
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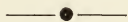
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The Lincoln Migration
from
Kentucky to Indiana
— 1816 —



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The Lincoln Migration from Kentucky to Indiana*

R. GERALD MCMURTRY

The migration of the Lincoln family from Kentucky to Indiana in the fall of 1816 is an important event in the study and chronology of the life of Abraham Lincoln.¹ This removal to Indiana was the fifth migration of the direct line of Lincoln's family in America, dating back three hundred years from 1937 to the arrival in this country on June 20, 1637, of Samuel Lincoln, the first American ancestor of the President.² The numerous Lincoln caravans, that moved westward through several different states, represent a typical American migration, as such movements were not unusual to pioneer life.³

In referring to the 1816 Lincoln migration, which included Thomas Lincoln and wife, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, and their children, Sarah and Abraham, historians usually first quote an excerpt from President Lincoln's autobiographical sketch that he prepared for John Locke Scripps, an early Lincoln biographer.⁴ Lincoln's own words regarding the migration are as follows:

From this place [Knob Creek Farm] he [Thomas Lincoln] removed to what is now Spencer County, Indiana, in the Autumn of 1816, Abraham then being in his eighth year.⁵ This removal was partly

* For several years, the author was engaged in research on the life of Lincoln when Librarian of the Lincoln National Life Foundation of Fort Wayne, Indiana.

¹ The migration to Indiana of the Lincoln family has been listed as one of the hundred outstanding events in Lincoln's life, *Lincoln Lore*, No. 326, July 8, 1935. *Lincoln Lore* is published by the Lincoln National Life Foundation of Fort Wayne, Indiana, and edited by Dr. Louis A. Warren.

² *Lincoln Lore*, No. 404, January 4, 1937.

³ "The story of the westward movement of the family through several different states, represents a typical American migration." Dr. Louis A. Warren to the writer, January 5, 1937.

⁴ Mr. Lincoln was nominated for President by the Republican national convention at Chicago on May 18, 1860. A Campaign "Life" was needed; Scripps was selected to write it. He immediately went to Springfield and secured from Lincoln, the short autobiography which covers about six pages of the Nicolay and Hay *Complete Works*. Foreword by M. L. Houser in the reprinted John Locke Scripps *Life of Abraham Lincoln* (Peoria, Illinois, 1931), 5.

⁵ If the migration to Indiana was in November, 1816, Abraham Lincoln's age was approximately seven years and nine months. Thomas Lincoln was forty years old and Nancy Hanks Lincoln is believed to have been about thirty-two or thirty-three years old in that year.

on account of slavery, but chiefly on account of the difficulty in land titles.

Historians have been prone to dismiss, as mere political propaganda, the slavery issue mentioned by Mr. Lincoln as a reason for the removal to Indiana.⁶ Such conclusions are not correct. The Severn's Valley Creek home (Elizabethtown), the home on the South Fork of Nolin River (birth-place farm), and the Knob Creek home were all located in Kentucky within a radius of fifteen miles, in which had been waged, during the first forty years of the nation's existence, a bitter controversy over slavery. There was no settlement in America, west of the Alleghany Mountains, where more consistent strife over the slavery question was evident than in the locality where the three Lincoln homes were situated.⁷ In fact, the anti-slavery issue was so intense in Hardin county, previous to the year 1816, that it is believed no other community in the entire country was so torn by controversial strife over the ever-growing institution of human bondage, than was the Kentucky environment of Lincoln's childhood years.⁸ In writing of the controversy, J. H. Spencer, the Baptist historian, said: "Slavery was by far the most fruitful of mischief of all questions that agitated the Baptist churches of Kentucky from 1788 until 1820."⁹ As the Hardin County slavery question was argued principally in the churches, it is not surprising that Thomas Lincoln was anxious to move his family to a more stable and contented community.¹⁰

Not a few students versed in Lincolniana, have maliciously criticized Thomas Lincoln for his periodic treks from one home site to another.¹¹ If one should make an exhaustive study of the facts behind the causes for his nomadic migrations, the conclusions would be that the Lincolns were the

⁶ "In 1811, when Abraham Lincoln was but two years old, the tax list for Hardin County (Kentucky) shows that there were 1007 slaves listed for taxation", Louis A. Warren, *The Slavery Atmosphere of Lincoln's Youth*, 12.

"When Thomas and Nancy Lincoln moved to Indiana in 1816 . . . the 'commissioners books' of Hardin County reveal that taxes were paid on 1238 slaves within the county limits." Louis A. Warren, *Lincoln's Parentage and Childhood*, 289.

⁷ Warren, *The Slavery Atmosphere of Lincoln's Youth*, 7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁹ J. H. Spencer, *A History of Kentucky Baptists*, I, 484.

¹⁰ "This community not only had been saturated with slavery arguments pro and con, for twenty-five years before Abraham Lincoln's nativity, but, on the very date of his birth, the church within two miles of where he was born was in the midst of the most prolonged disturbances which had ever occurred in the congregation over the subject of slavery." Warren, *The Slavery Atmosphere of Lincoln's Youth*, 8.

¹¹ In none of the pioneers was the spirit of restlessness more active than in Thomas Lincoln. He could not settle down to the work of establishing himself comfortably in the community in which he lived. He intended to improve his home conditions, to build a better and larger house, just as soon as he could find a location to suit his fancy. J. Roger Gore, *The Boyhood of Abraham Lincoln*, 51.

victims of defective land laws, unscrupulous land owners, land agents and land lawyers. At a very early period in the nation's history, large portions of land in Kentucky were obtained under Virginia land warrants, in the names of many prominent and wealthy Americans. As the land was not settled or assigned by them, the ownership of certain tracts was lost sight of by pioneers looking for farms and homes, with the result that much of the territory of Kentucky was claimed by several different parties. Pioneer settlers sometimes bought their land three and four times, to effect a clear title. Others, in despair and disappointment, abandoned their estates and moved to other states or territories where they could get "Congress Land" (government surveyed land), the title of which was indisputable. There were likely no people in America so cursed with land litigation as the pioneer Kentuckians, because of the lack of adequate land regulations pertaining to priority of ownership.¹² Such unfavorable and disgusting conditions caused the Lincolns to lose considerable money in Kentucky, and were responsible in a large measure for their migration to Indiana.

In summarizing Thomas Lincoln's disastrous holdings of Kentucky land deeds and grants, interesting conclusions may be drawn. The father of the President, from the year 1803 to 1816, purchased three farms. The first was sold with a loss of thirty-eight acres, which represented a loss of eighteen English pounds. The second farm he bought by a cash payment and the assumption of a small obligation, but he eventually lost the down payment for the property, plus court costs. His third farm was lost through an ejectment suit.¹³ Such difficulties with land titles naturally caused Thomas Lincoln to seek a new country, where there was no overlapping of land grants, and where real property was adequately surveyed into sections (square miles) and recorded with clear titles, once it was purchased. He decided that Indiana offered good opportunities.

When the Lincolns were dispossessed of their farm on Knob Creek by the heirs of Thomas Middleton, there were nine other neighboring farmers who had purchased parts of the ten thousand acre Middleton tract, who, likewise, lost

¹² H. D. Taylor, *Ohio County, Kentucky, in the Olden Days* (Chapter on "Early Land Titles"), 47.

¹³ Warren, *Lincoln's Parentage and Childhood*, 122.

their property.¹⁴ These nine property owners were Jesse LaFollette, Isaac LaFollette, Will Brownfield, Clark Tucker, Peter Minges, Job Dye, George Redmond, William Ash and Ignatius Strange.¹⁵ The plaintiffs decided to make the Lincoln suit a test case of the ten ejectment suits, and after a prolonged court fight, Thomas Lincoln left Kentucky. It is erroneously believed by many, that the nine ejected families accompanied the Lincolns on their journey to Indiana in 1816. While it is true that many of these families did eventually leave Kentucky, the Lincoln migration was a distinct and separate movement.¹⁶

The 1816 Lincoln migration has received a three-fold discussion from several writers, who have related facts and traditions regarding a prospecting trip, a water trip and a land trip made by Thomas Lincoln, in effecting a permanent settlement in the new country across the Ohio. These narrations, whether they be true or false, concerning the different Indiana journeys of Thomas Lincoln, have caused considerable perplexing traditional data to be released, which has beclouded the principal facts of the autumn of 1816 migration from Kentucky to Indiana. Likewise, the journey to Indiana in the late fall of 1819, made by Thomas Lincoln and Sarah Bush Johnston (and her children) shortly after their marriage in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, on December 2, 1819, has caused much confusion regarding the Lincoln family migration of 1816.¹⁷

Many Lincoln biographers, in their published works, have elaborated on a traditional story concerning a water trip, which is alleged to have been made by Thomas Lincoln in the early autumn of 1816.¹⁸ It has been said that the trip was made on a raft or boat which was loaded with several barrels or hogsheads of whisky and a set of carpenter's tools. The whisky was supposed to have been received from the sale of the Knob Creek farm. According to the myth, the

¹⁴ Louis A. Warren, "Lincolns and LaFollettes, Were They Kinsfolk"? *Lincoln Lore*, No. 124 (August 24, 1931), 4.

¹⁵ Jesse LaFollette was the grandfather of the late Senator Robert Marion LaFollette of Wisconsin. *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁶ Jesse LaFollette migrated to Harrison County, Indiana in the fall of 1816. *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁷ R. Gerald McMurtry, *The Lincolns in Elizabethtown, Kentucky*, 12-14. "Following the death of Nancy Hanks Lincoln, two years after her arrival in Indiana, Thomas Lincoln went back to Elizabethtown for a second wife. This new caravan started from Elizabethtown, Kentucky, in the month of December, 1819, with the following members: Thomas Lincoln (age 43), Sarah Johnston Lincoln (age 31), Elizabeth Johnston (age 12), Matilda Johnson (age 8), and John D. Johnston (age 4)." See *Lincoln Lore*, No. 7, May 27, 1929.

¹⁸ T. B. Peterson, and Brothers, *Life and Public Service of Abraham Lincoln*, (1864), 23-24.

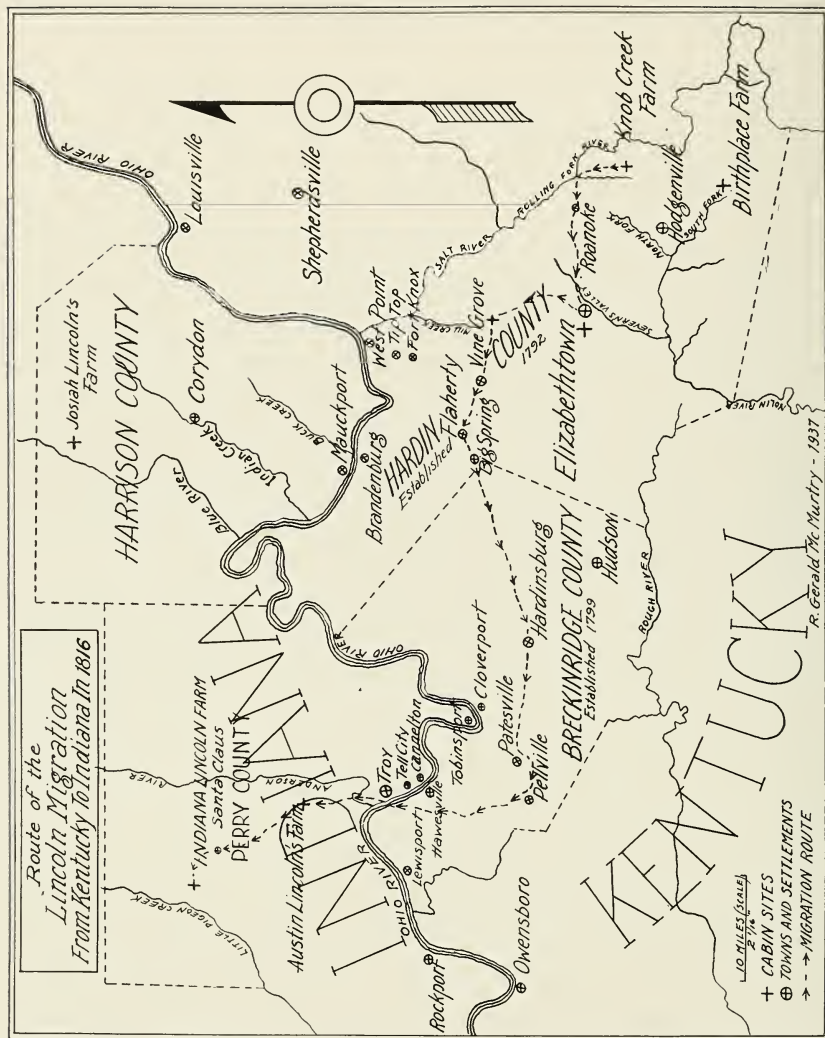
crude water craft was wrecked, and Thomas Lincoln only recovered his carpenter's tools. This dramatic incident cannot be accepted as truth, because Thomas Lincoln could not have traded his farm, from which he was ejected, for whisky or any other valuable consideration. This fact should eliminate all traditions relating to a water trip of Lincoln's father to Indiana.

It is an historic fact that the wagon and four-horse team of Ralph Crume were used as a mode of conveyance for the Lincoln-Johnston wedding journey of 1819. Ralph Crume married Mary Lincoln, a sister of Thomas Lincoln, and he is said to have hauled the family and household goods to the Ohio River by way of the Crume farm, which was in Breckinridge county, not far from Hardinsburg, the county seat.¹⁹ From this community, it has been related, they proceeded to Hardinsburg, Kentucky, and their course from there on is unknown, however, it is likely that the 1816 migration route was followed. As a result of this supposed visit to the Crume farm, a considerable number of affidavits are on file erroneously stating that Abraham Lincoln traveled through the Howe's Valley community of Hardin County to Breckenridge County and Hardinsburg in the year 1816.

Many oral accounts, that have almost become legendary in the Kentucky Lincoln country, relate that Thomas Lincoln made six trips to Indiana. He is alleged to have made two journeys there before his marriage to Nancy Hanks, then the migration trip with his wife and family in the autumn of 1816, then after her death, he is said to have returned to Elizabethtown, Kentucky with his son, Abraham, for a visit which necessitated a return journey. The next trip to Indiana was with his second wife, Mrs. Sarah Bush Johnston, in 1819, and it is further related that a few years later Thomas and Sarah Bush returned to Elizabethtown for a visit, which likewise resulted in a return journey to the Indiana Lincoln home. Regardless of the many oral and recorded accounts pertaining to the travels of Thomas Lincoln, it is hardly likely that he made over three trips to Indiana, the first being the prospecting trip, the second the migratory journey of 1816 and the last trip, which was the Lincoln-Johnston wedding

¹⁹ Louis A. Warren, *Sarah Bush Lincoln, the Stepmother of Abraham Lincoln*. Reprint from the *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 1926, 8.

"The eldest daughter, Mary, was married to Ralph Crume, and some of her descendants are now living in Breckenridge County, Kentucky." Scripps, *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, 8. See Note 4 above.



journey in 1819. While all three Indiana trips are of unusual interest, nevertheless, the journeys made before and after the fall migration of 1816, do not rank historically with the Lincoln family movement, which was an important episode in the life of the future President of the United States.

In writing of the facts concerning the land route followed in 1816, the date of departure is an important item for an exhaustive study. One historian has established the time of the migration as June, 1816, which is about five months too early, while another suggests the exodus date as November 1817, which is a year too late.²⁰ Documentary evidence, in the form of an endorsement filed in the Lincoln Knob Creek Farm ejectment suit, affirms that "the Lincolns moved off the place in the fall of 1816." As a result of the discovery of a document in the files of the Nelson County (Kentucky) Court, there is evidence that Thomas Lincoln was still in Kentucky on November 11, 1816, when he appeared before a justice of the peace and made oath to a bill in connection with his land litigation. This is the latest evidence known of the residence of the Lincoln family in Kentucky.²¹

The birthplace farm, in which Thomas Lincoln still held an interest, was sold by a commissioner named Benjamin Wright on December 19, 1816.²² If Lincoln remained for this sale, we may place the migration date shortly after that date. However, it is unlikely that he remained for this unpleasant transaction. He undoubtedly moved a few days after November 11, in order to escape bad traveling conditions which would probably result from the usually bad winters of pioneer Kentucky. In a newspaper clipping (identity unknown) which was incorporated into a scrap-book, the statement is made that the weather during the early winter of 1816-17 had been very cold and stormy with frost and ice nearly every month, but that the first half of December was the most pleasant season of the entire winter.²³ If this weather report is accurate, we may conclude that the Lincoln migration proceeded toward Indiana in the latter part of November with

²⁰ Warren, *Lincoln's Parentage and Childhood*, 290.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 290-291.

²² *Ibid.*, 117.

²³ The scrap book weather report is mentioned by Charles T. Baker, editor of the Grandview (Indiana) *Monitor*, in a typewritten manuscript entitled, "The Route and Ferriage of the Lincolns." This manuscript was presented to the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky, as proof of the correctness of a route over which the Lincolns are said to have traveled. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.



THOMAS LINCOLN'S KNOB CREEK CABIN (NOT EXTANT)
LaRue County, Kentucky, 1811-1816

Photograph of the traditional Lincoln Knob Creek Cabin
taken in the fall of 1903.

Courtesy of Lincoln National Life Foundation,
Fort Wayne, Indiana.

cold and stormy weather but under favorable traveling conditions.

The type of conveyance used to transport Thomas Lincoln and his family, is not known. In all likelihood, the conveyance was drawn by horses, with a few head of cattle driven along on foot.²⁴ In the year 1816, the father of the President listed for taxes four head of horses, and it is not reasonable to believe that he would dispose of them because of the migration.²⁵ Several biographers have vividly drawn upon their imaginations and stated that the Lincolns packed their belongings upon three horses, while another says, two horses were borrowed to carry their household effects. One biographer describes a spring-wagon drawn by two horses, in which was seated upon a bed of straw Nancy Hanks Lincoln and her daughter, Sarah.²⁶ Numerous affidavits are on file, stating that Thomas Lincoln had a cart (two-wheeled wagon) drawn by oxen, a cow and a saddle horse that constituted the mode of conveyance. However, there is no documentary evidence which would lead one to believe that Thomas Lincoln ever owned oxen while living in Kentucky. The mere fact that he owned four horses would certainly indicate that he would not have used oxen.²⁷

²⁴ "No doubt their cavalcade was simply, a covered wagon, stout and roomy; horses, not less than three, a sow or two, a few hens 'to start with', and, of course, a dog." Ida M. Tarbell, *In the Footsteps of the Lincolns*, 115.

"He [Col. John Cowley] told me [John H. Hibbs] he saw Lincoln when a small boy, when Tom Lincoln moved to Indiana, and that Tom Lincoln was a mighty poor man as he had all his things in one wagon and room for his wife and family. He said he saw and remembered the boy and girl in the wagon that passed his father's house [Mill Creek Community] and that the boy must have had lots of horse sense and studied hard or he never would have been president of the United States. He lived the last 25 years of his life with no good feelings for that boy he saw in the wagon with Tom Lincoln on their way to Indiana in the year 1816. Affidavit of John H. Hibbs, May 16, 1931. Collection of G. E. McMurtry, of Vine Grove, Ky.

²⁵ The Hardin County Commissioner's Tax Books, for the year 1816, list Thomas Lincoln as a tithable with four horses. The 1815 entry lists four horses, one a stallion, and it is assumed, he owned the stallion in 1816.

In a brief prepared by the Corydon, Indiana, Lincoln Memorial Highway Association, the statement is made, that the July, 1816, tax assessment, of Thomas Lincoln, listed two cows. Page 3. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

²⁶ Warren, *Lincoln's Parentage and Childhood*, 292.

²⁷ "The affiant . . . states that he has heard older members of the family say that Capt. Denton Geoghegan sold Thomas Lincoln a team as part payment for work on said Geoghegan mill [near the head of Rough Creek], and said Thomas Lincoln used this team in moving his family to Indiana." Affidavit of B. H. Cecil, Cecilia, Kentucky, June 23, 1931. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky. As Thomas Lincoln constructed the Geoghegan mill shortly after his marriage in 1806, it is unlikely that he kept the Geoghegan horses for ten years and then used them in the migration journey of 1816.

It is of interest to note, that ox teams were used by the Lincolns in their migration from Indiana to Illinois, in the year 1830. An excerpt from Lincoln's "autobiographical sketch," prepared for John Locke Scripps, gives this information concerning the ox teams and wagons which constituted the means of transport of the sixth migration of President Lincoln's family in America:

"March, 1830, Abraham, having just completed his twenty-first year, his father and family, with the families of the two daughters and sons-in-law of his step-mother, left the old homestead in Indiana and came to Illinois. Their mode of conveyance was wagons drawn by ox-teams, and Abraham drove one of the teams." See Note 4, above.

The household stores and personal effects that were taken along very likely consisted of furniture of home manufacture made by Thomas Lincoln, clothing, a feather-bed, home-woven "Kiverlids", kitchen utensils, a loom, a spinning-wheel and light farming equipment. In all probability, the cabinet-making, wood-working tools of Thomas Lincoln were carefully placed in a safe corner of the pioneer vehicle, and it is reasonable to believe that food and camping equipment were carried along to facilitate the rigors of pioneer travel.²⁸ Nancy Hanks Lincoln and daughter, Sarah, must have securely guarded their large family Bible, along with the personal belongings that they treasured, while young Abraham had packed in the wagon his *Aesop's Fables*, *Dilworth's Speller* and a few other books that he had been able to acquire.²⁹ No doubt, a large bundle of legal papers, practically all in the hand-writing of Samuel Haycraft, Jr., the Hardin County Court clerk, were taken along for future reference in regard to muddled Kentucky land claims.³⁰

It is mere supposition to say that the Lincolns, before they started their eventful journey, paid their last respects at the grave of their infant son, Thomas, whose short span of life began and ended at their Knob Creek Valley home.³¹ This infant child, a brother of Abraham Lincoln, is now believed to have been buried in the Redmond family burying ground, only one-half mile distant from their last Kentucky home.³² Biographers have barely mentioned the infant Thomas, and a tradition is current that the child died three days after birth and that George Redmond carried the coffin that

²⁸ As the traditional myth, that Thomas Lincoln made a "water trip" to Indiana on a raft loaded with whisky and carpenter's tools, has no authentic foundation, it is believed his tools were taken along on this journey.

²⁹ "There are said to have been three books in the early Kentucky home of the Lincolns—the Bible, *Dilworth's Speller* and *Aesop's Fables*. The Bible belonged to the parents; the speller was undoubtedly purchased for the oldest child, and then passed on to her brother; but it would appear that *Aesop's Fables* was Abraham's very own. Tradition says, it was a gift from his mother." *Lincoln Lore*, No. 58, May 19, 1930.

³⁰ In a letter, written by Abraham Lincoln to Samuel Haycraft, Jr., of Elizabethtown, Kentucky, dated May 28, 1860, the following statement was made: "I do not think I ever saw you, though I well know who you are—so well that I recognized your handwriting, on opening your letter, before I saw the signature. My recollection is that Ben Helm was the first clerk [County Clerk of Hardin County Court], that you succeeded him, that Jack Thomas and William Farleigh graduated in the same office and that your handwritings were all very similar."

The question arises, how could Lincoln, after so many years, recognize Haycraft's writing? An explanation would be, that Thomas Lincoln acquired, in his many Hardin County Court transactions, considerable paper, and possibly Abraham Lincoln in his youth, assisted his father in his accounts and may on numerous occasions have read these documents written in Haycraft's hand. R. Gerald McMurtry, "Lincoln and the Haycrafts," *Hardin County Enterprise*, August 27, 1936.

³¹ "The year 1811 is usually given as the time of both his birth and death, although no record of either event is available." *Lincoln Lore*, No. 244, December 11, 1933.

³² Francis E. Wylie, "Grave of Lincoln's Infant Brother Believed Found," *Herald Post*, Louisville, Ky., October 23, 1933.

contained the body of the Lincoln child up the hill to the Redmond graveyard.³³ In later years, President Lincoln made the brief statement in his autobiographical sketch, that "a brother, younger, died in infancy."³⁴

After leaving their home on Knob Creek, the family, no doubt, looked forward with great anticipation to their eventful journey.³⁵ Since the trails over which they were to travel, passed through several well established towns, it is believed that the entire route was familiar to Thomas Lincoln. Travelers in this community were not an unusual sight as there were many families loaded in covered wagons with all their worldly goods, moving from sections of Green, Hart, Hardin (and that part of Hardin that is now LaRue) Counties towards the West or Northwest.³⁶ The family, undoubtedly, expected to enjoy the journey, as they were to visit their old friends in Elizabethtown and then move on to William Brumfield's home on Mill Creek, where they intended to spend a few days.

It is logical to believe that Thomas Lincoln, on his departure from Knob Creek, would select the road to Elizabethtown that ran near his home as well as because it was the most direct route of travel. Such a road was located about three miles northeast from his farm, having been established in the year 1793 and kept in repair up to and after the year of the migration.³⁷ Traditional evidence, concerning this road, relates that Thomas Sparks, an early settler in this community, was one of the first residents of the county to blaze a trail from Knob Creek to Elizabethtown, which eventually became a wagon road and was used by the pioneers in their travels to the county seat.³⁸ The Lincoln Knob Creek Farm was located on the Nolin-Bardstown road, which was commonly called the Old Cumberland Trail from Louisville and Bardstown to Nashville. At the point where Knob Creek flows into the Rolling Fork of Salt River, the Springfield-

³³ George Redmond died March 1, 1817, at the age of 69, and lies buried in the Redmond Cemetery. *Ibid.*

³⁴ Scripps, *Life of Abraham Lincoln*.

³⁵ "I can scarcely believe that Nancy and Thomas Lincoln would have left the state without a farewell visit to Washington county, where both of them had spent so much time in their youth and where they had been married." Tarbell, *In the Footsteps of the Lincolns*, 115.

³⁶ Affidavit of T. B. Henderson. October 5, 1931. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

³⁷ Five attested copies of court orders, dating from 1793 to 1809, taken from the order books of the Hardin County Court Clerk's office, establishing the Elizabethtown-Springfield road, and appointing surveyors and overseers to maintain said road, are on file with the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

³⁸ Affidavit of T. H. Robert (great-great-grandson of Thomas Sparks). Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

Elizabethtown road crossed the Old Cumberland Trail, and at this junction the Lincolns left the ancient highway and traveled in a northwesterly direction to Elizabethtown. This ridge road crosses no streams and is located on a divide between Nolin River on the south and the Rolling Fork of Salt River on the north. This segment of the Elizabethtown-Springfield road traverses a section of the Muldraugh Hill range, which section is called Cissell's Hill, and runs by the way of Roanoke to Elizabethtown.³⁹ The pioneer wagon trail was commonly called the Springfield road in the Elizabethtown community, and Thomas Lincoln is believed to have traveled practically its entire course in the year 1806 when he returned to Elizabethtown with his bride whom he married in Springfield, Kentucky.

The journey of 1816, no doubt, was very slow, even unusually slow, as they passed by the homes of their neighbors and friends, who must have stopped them to bid them farewell. Tradition states, that after proceeding on their way a short distance, the Lincolns stopped at the farm of Rollie Thomas, now known as the Mack Thomas place, and fed their team under a large elm tree.⁴⁰ Mrs. Jane Dunn, a friend and neighbor of Nancy Hanks Lincoln, upon hearing that the Lincolns had stopped at the Rollie Thomas place, went to tell Mrs. Lincoln good-bye.⁴¹ The departure through the Knob Creek community without doubt occasioned many brief moments of sadness, but with firm determination the Lincolns continued their journey westward.

The approximate distance from the Lincoln Knob Creek farm, by way of the old Springfield road to Elizabethtown, is eighteen miles. Early accounts, concerning the first phase of the journey, indicate that the Lincolns traveled only a short distance the first day, and according to some of the older residents of the Knob Creek community, namely, Robert Cissell, Elias Johnson, Raymond Johnson, Hawkins

³⁹ *Ibid.* "I believe that the above mentioned route was the one taken by Lincoln when he left Kentucky, from information gathered from conversations I had with Austin Gollahoe [Gollaher], and Mrs. Ann Thompson both of whom knew the Lincoln family well." Declaration of Levi Brown, n. d., Hodgenville, Ky. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

"The Springfield road is on high land and for this reason [is], the most probable route. History, reason and observation has led me to entertain the conviction that the Springfield road was the one the family took in migrating north." Declaration of J. H. Florence of New Haven, Kentucky, ex-magistrate of LaRue County, Ky., n. d. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

⁴⁰ Affidavit of O. G. Atherton (grandson of William Atherton), January 17, 1931. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

⁴¹ Affidavit of Wesley Ballinger (grandson of Mrs. Jane Dunn), January 17, 1931. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.



THE OLD CUMBERLAND TRAIL
Knob Creek, LaRue County, Kentucky

Thomas Lincoln's Knob Creek farm was located on the Nolin-Bardstown road, which was commonly called the Old Cumberland Trail, from Louisville and Bardstown to Nashville. Upon the departure of the Lincolns from Knob Creek to Indiana they traveled over a section of this old turnpike. This photograph, taken in the year 1903, shows that little improvement had been made in the road, though approximately one hundred years had passed since the Lincolns resided there.

Courtesy of Lincoln National Life Foundation,
Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Woods and others, the Lincolns spent their first night on this trip with William Atherton, a friend and neighbor, whose farm was located near the community of Roanoke.⁴²

Upon resuming their journey the next day, it is believed that they arrived in Elizabethtown. Here Thomas Lincoln lived and worked as early as 1796; here he brought his bride in the year 1806 to establish their first home; here Sarah, their first child, was born on February 10, 1807; and here Nancy Hanks experienced a second premonition of motherhood, which resulted in the birth of Abraham Lincoln on their farm along the South Fork of Nolin River on February 12, 1809.⁴³ After crossing Severn's Valley Creek, the Springfield road enters Elizabethtown from the east, and the Lincolns likely made their entrance from that direction, which would take them by familiar landmarks associated with their former Elizabethtown cabin home.⁴⁴

Elizabethtown, in the fall of 1816, presented a quaint, frontier appearance. Though some settlers had arrived in the late fall of 1779, the town was founded in the year 1793, but not regularly established until 1797. Here was located the county seat of Hardin County, but the town did not experience rapid growth, as the third census taken in the year 1810 listed only one hundred eighty inhabitants.⁴⁵ In spite of its small population, Elizabethtown was a scene of much activity and presented to the Lincolns, particularly young Abraham, a town of metropolitan proportions. It was the largest community Abraham Lincoln had ever seen, and it was the only center of population in which the Lincolns had ever lived.⁴⁶

⁴² Affidavit of T. H. Robert, December 3, 1931. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

According to traditional evidence, the home of William Atherton was located about one-half mile from the Elizabethtown-Springfield road. An Appeal to the Chairman and Committee of the Lincoln Memorial Route Appointed for Kentucky (Signed petition of 165 names), 2. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

⁴³ McMurtry, *The Lincolns in Elizabethtown, Kentucky*. Pamphlet.

⁴⁴ There is a tradition that the Lincolns visited in the home of Nancy's uncle, Joseph Hanks, in Elizabethtown, while *en route* to Indiana, however, there are several documentary records that refute such a conclusion.

⁴⁵ Lucius P. Little, *Ben Hardin, His Times and Contemporaries*, 31.

⁴⁶ In November 1936, a bronze tablet was erected on a new concrete bridge that was constructed in Elizabethtown by the Kentucky State Highway Department. This tablet mentions the 1816 migration and records the fact that the Lincoln family, in traveling to Indiana, passed over Severn's Valley Creek and entered Elizabethtown, *en route* to their future home. The tablet inscription is as follows:

"Lincoln-Haycraft Memorial Bridge, 1936. Here on Severn's Valley Creek, Samuel Haycraft, Senior, In The Year 1797, Built A Mill And Race Way. Thomas Lincoln, Father Of The 16th President Of The United States, Was Employed To Assist In The Construction Of This Primitive Water Mill, And It Was Here That He Received His First Regular Monetary Wages. Abraham Lincoln, In The Year 1816, When But Seven Years Of Age, Migrated With His Family Westward, Crossing Severn's Valley Creek To Enter Elizabethtown, Kentucky, Enroute To The State

After calling upon their old friends, Thomas Lincoln, no doubt visited the Hardin County Courthouse, because of his many land suits and legal transactions which were still pending, and which were to be placed on the docket at the next term of court. It was at Elizabethtown that the family deviated from their westward course and traveled northward over a route originally called Bullitt's Salt Lick Trail. The location of Bullitt's Salt Licks, where the first salt works in Kentucky were established, was about three miles from Shepherdsville, and a considerable portion of the old Salt Lick Trail is today called the Shepherdsville road. The wagon road followed by the Lincolns, in the Mill Creek community ran parallel to an improved county seat trail, leading out of Elizabethtown which was located west of the Mill Creek Lincoln farm, and it was for the upkeep and maintenance of this road that Thomas Lincoln was a petitioner in 1804. The first place of interest as they traveled this way was the farm which Thomas Lincoln had purchased in the year 1803 and had sold to Charles Melton in 1814. After passing their first farm, they continued northward to the Douglas spring where tradition relates they stopped and ate their lunch.⁴⁷

According to an affidavit, which from its source and apparent accurate detail, appears to be authentic, the statement is made that the Lincolns traveled the Shepherdsville road to E. A. Vier's place, and then turned west from there to the old Dowdell Ferry road in the direction of the William Brumfield farm.⁴⁸ The junction of the Dowdell Ferry road with the Shepherdsville road at the E. A. Viers' property, was located about eight miles north of Elizabeth-

Of Indiana. The Hardin County Historical Society, 1936."

James Buchanan, who preceded Abraham Lincoln in the presidency, lived in Elizabethtown, Kentucky for several months, in the year 1813, within approximately twenty miles of the Lincoln home on Knob Creek. R. Gerald McMurtry, *James Buchanan in Kentucky*, 1813. Pamphlet, reprinted from the *Filson Club History Quarterly*, Louisville, Kentucky (April, 1934), VIII, 73-87.

⁴⁷ "She [Margaret Douglas] told me that Thomas Lincoln, Nancy Lincoln, his wife, and the little boy, Abe, stopped at their spring and ate their lunch and informed them that they were leaving Kentucky for Indiana, and were on their way by the way of their sister Nancy Brumfield. At that time many people on the Shepherdsville and Dowdell roads knew Thomas Lincoln as he made frequent trips to and from William Brumfields, and prior to this time for twelve years, had owned a farm a few miles south of the Douglas farm." Affidavit of Felix O. Viers, June 23, 1930. Collection of G. E. McMurtry of Vine Grove, Kentucky.

⁴⁸ "Thomas Lincoln and family started from Hodgenville [Abraham Lincoln's Birthplace] and went to Elizabethtown. From there to E. A. Viers' place [now owned by Mrs. Emma Cowley and Waverly Viers] and to James McWilliams' place [now owned by Mrs. J. H. Shelton] to Isaac Emery's place [now owned by Mrs. V. Shelton and F. O. Viers] to Capt. John Hibbs' place [now owned by Mrs. Jenny Leonard] to Hezekiah Stovall's place [now owned by Mrs. Leonard] to Rev. David Carr's place [now owned by Grover Cook] to John Cowley's place [now owned by Josh Bird] and to Wm. Brumfield's place [now owned by E. J. French] and stopped there." *Ibid.* The affiant (Felix O. Viers) is mistaken regarding the starting point of the Lincoln family migration. The 1816 migration began at Knob Creek in Kentucky and ended at Little Pigeon Creek in Indiana.

town. After turning west from the Shepherdsville road to the Dowdell Ferry road, the Lincolns traveled approximately two or three miles in a northwesterly direction, and then turned from the Dowdell Ferry road to a pioneer trail which was established in the year 1802 that ran by the Brumfield farm. William Brumfield's home was located about six or seven miles from the farm that Thomas Lincoln once owned. Thomas Lincoln traveled in this direction to visit his mother, Bersheba, the widow of Abraham Lincoln, the pioneer Revolutionary War Captain, and his sister, Nancy Ann Lincoln Brumfield.⁴⁹ The Brumfield Mill Creek farm, where Bersheba and her daughter Nancy Brumfield lived for more than thirty years, was situated approximately twelve miles from Elizabethtown, which in pioneer times, would represent a day's travel.⁵⁰

Nancy Ann Lincoln married William Brumfield on February 3, 1801, and it is believed Bersheba went to live with her youngest daughter, after her family was scattered by marriage.⁵¹ The Brumfields with the widowed mother probably settled on the Thomas Lincoln farm that he purchased in 1803. When the Lincoln family visited the Brumfields *en route* to Indiana, they were living on a different farm, as Thomas Lincoln had sold his property to Charles Melton two years before. Many are of the opinion that Thomas Lincoln's other sister, Mary Lincoln Crume, at this time, was living in Breckinridge County, and in all probability, because of her isolated location, she did not bid the family farewell when they left the state. It is of interest to recall a previous statement that early traditional accounts relate, that Thomas Lincoln with his second wife and her children visited the Crume

⁴⁹ "Col. Jim Hays said that when Thomas Lincoln went to Indiana to live, he was at Wm. Brumfield's for several days, and while there went over to the Crandel Shed neighborhood into what was then Jefferson County to collect some money that was owing him by a man that ran a still to make whiskey." *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ "Bersheba Lincoln made her home with the Brumfields until her death in 1832." G. E. McMurtry, "More Lincoln Facts Are Told," *Elizabethtown News*, January 20, 1931.

⁵¹ "We are positive that the first name of Abraham Lincoln's wife in 1780 and the widow he left in 1786 was Bersheba but there is no record which gives her family name. Whether or not she is the woman, whom Abraham Lincoln married in 1770 and the mother of all his children is problematical." *Lincoln Lore*, No. 168, June 27, 1932.

Nancy Ann Lincoln Brumfield was born March 25, 1780, and a permit taken from the files of the marriage bonds and permits for the year 1801, of Washington County, Kentucky, reveal that Bersheba was her mother by blood relationship. There were five Lincoln children, namely—Mordecia, Josiah, Thomas, Mary and Nancy. It has been suggested that the four older children were the progeny of Captain Abraham Lincoln's supposed first wife. *Lincoln Lore* No. 174. August 8, 1932. Warren, *Lincoln's Parentage and Childhood*, 15.

As Bersheba was such a faithful wife and mother, and as she kept her orphan children together until they reached maturity, and because of her motherly care and the devotion of the Lincoln children for her welfare, it has appeared to the average layman, not familiar with historical research, that a blood relationship must have existed between the mother and all of the Lincoln children.

home in Breckenridge County in the fall of 1819, on the way to Indiana.

It is important to note that nearly all of Lincoln's relatives and many of his friends at that time lived in and around Mill Creek.⁵² The Crutcher, Rogers, Haycraft, Moffitt, Cowley and Viers families lived in this community. While near-by in the Vine Grove section, which was adjacent to the Mill Creek community, there were to be found numerous Nall and Van Meter families; and also Lewis, Moorman, Daviess, Ray, Woolfolk, Ditto, Haynes, Corbett, Nevitt, Brown and Howell families, all of whom were, presumably, acquaintances of the Lincolns.⁵³

The Lincolns visited in the Mill Creek community for several days, and it is to be supposed that the two Lincoln children thoroughly enjoyed playing with their cousins, Mary, Elizabeth, Lucretia and Susan, the four daughters of the Brumfields.⁵⁴ This occasion may have been the first, and it was certainly the last, time that Bersheba, the grandmother of the future president, ever saw young Abraham, named for her husband and his grandfather who had been massacred near their Long Run home in Jefferson county, in 1786, by a marauding band of Indians thirty years before. This youth was her youngest son's youngest child.⁵⁵

After the termination of their short visit with the Brumfield family, the Lincolns traveled directly west, approximately twelve miles, passing within the first mile, the First Regu-

⁵² "The Sixth Magisterial District of Hardin County [Mill Creek Community] in which the Brumfields lived, now contains more living descendants of Abraham Lincoln, the first [Captain Abraham Lincoln], than likely any state." Affidavit of G. E. McMurtry [Grandson of Samuel Haycraft, Jr., author of *The History of Elizabethtown, Kentucky* (1869)] February 8, 1930. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

⁵³ G. E. McMurtry, "More Lincoln Facts Are Told," *Elizabethtown News*, January 20, 1931.

⁵⁴ "During these ten years [while living on Mill Creek] I did hear Mrs. Cretia [Lucretia] Austin [daughter of Nancy Lincoln Brumfield] talk to my father and mother at various times and did hear her say that her Uncle Tom and his family stopped several days with her father and mother [Brumfields] when he moved his family to Indiana." Affidavit of G. E. McMurtry, February 8, 1930. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky. *Lincoln Lore* ("Abraham Lincoln's First Cousins"), No. 322, June 10, 1935.

"My mother, who died in the year 1915 and was 82 years old at her death, was the youngest daughter of the large family of David Carr, who was a neighbor to the same Wm. Brumfield, who married the sister of Thomas Lincoln and lived less than one half mile from the same Wm. Brumfield and his family. I have often heard my mother repeat what an older sister had told her in regard to the Lincoln family, stopping for a short visit with Wm. Brumfield, Thos. Lincoln's brother in law, and also said some of them came riding and some of them came walking. She said that they were moving from Kentucky to Indiana." Affidavit of W. G. Cowley, January 18, 1930. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

⁵⁵ "On this farm [Brumfield's Mill Creek home] is perhaps the only man-made thing now visible upon which Thomas Lincoln and his family might have gazed back in the Autumn of 1816. It is the old chimney to the house in which Abraham's grandmother, Bersheba, lived and died." *The Hardin County Enterprise*, July 13, 1933.

lar Baptist Church of Mill Creek and the church cemetery in which the mother, sister and relatives of Thomas were to eventually find their last resting places.⁵⁶ They followed the old pioneer trail (established in 1802) through Vine Grove (Viney Grove) and after crossing Otter Creek, they traveled through what is now known as the community of Flaherty to the town of Big Spring. The trail from Flaherty followed by way of the Woolfork brick house at Jackey's Grove, then on to Big Spring.⁵⁷ Here emigrating pioneers usually camped, repaired their equipment and stocked up with provisions for the remainder of their journey. Big Spring is located in Kentucky where the boundaries of Hardin, Meade (established 1823) and Breckinridge counties meet. In the village a large underground stream rises to the surface, only to find again its subterranean channel a short distance away.⁵⁸ Such a stream afforded an excellent watering place for the travelers. Upon the arrival of the Lincoln family in this pioneer community, they probably fell in with other groups of emigrants and at this point for a short time the Lincoln Party became a part of a larger western caravan.

The Lincolns likely remained in Big Spring a short while, and they probably became acquainted with some of the residents of the village.⁵⁹ An interesting tradition relates that while the Lincolns were in Big Spring, a resident there pro-

⁵⁶ The Mill Creek Baptist Church Cemetery contains the graves of many early pioneer Kentuckians. In this three acre plot a rough hewn stone marks the grave of Bersheba Lincoln, the grandmother of the President, another primitive slab marks the grave of Nancy Lincoln Brumfield, paternal aunt of Abraham Lincoln. This church yard cemetery was presented to the State of Kentucky on August 11, 1936, to be developed as a unit of the Kentucky State Park System. Efforts are now being made to have a road constructed from the Dixie Highway (31W) in northern Hardin County to the cemetery, located approximately two miles north of the highway, in order that the historic site may be made available to the public. Samuel J. Boldrick, *Lincoln Lore*, from the *Courier-Journal*, June 14, 1936.

"A mile on is the old cemetery of the First Regular Baptist Church of Mill Creek, in which five members of the original Lincoln family are buried. Sixteen direct descendants of Nancy Ann Lincoln Brumfield still live in the Mill Creek community, and the family names of Nancy and Abraham still predominate". *Hardin County Enterprise*, July 13, 1933.

"Hard by (Fort Knox Gold Depository—\$6,000,000,000 in United States gold on deposit) sleeps, with only a slab of rough limestone, untouched by chisel or saw, at her head, the grandmother of Abraham Lincoln, surrounded by pioneers of her generation, all of whose lives were lived in severe simplicity." Editorial: "Fifty Trains of Gold." *The Louisville Times*, August 12, 1936.

⁵⁷ Arthur F. Hall and others: *Lincoln Memorial Way Through Indiana*. Privately printed by Governor Harry G. Leslie (Indianapolis, 1932), 25.

⁵⁸ This subterranean stream has been referred to in various localities as Sinking Creek, Lost Run Creek and Lost River.

⁵⁹ "In regard to the Lincoln Highway and Thomas Lincoln's Journey thru this part of Kentucky, with his family, I have heard many times, years ago that he made camp at Big Spring, Ky., while *en route* from Elizabethtown to Hardinsburg." Affidavit of Sue M. Board, October 13, 1930. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

"I, John Nelson Tucker wish to certify in this statement that I was born April 11, 1863 about 20 mi[les] south and a little west of Big Spring, Meade Co. Ky. That I heard my grandfather Jim Tucker who died in 1880 say that he saw Tom Lincoln

cured from Thomas Lincoln a book in which he had written his name, and which belonged to young Abraham. According to the story, the book, of which the title is unknown, was in the possession of Mrs. Lydia Ann Williams a number of years but was eventually lost by her during house cleaning time and was probably burned.⁶⁰

After getting under way, the caravan left Big Spring and proceeded to the next important stop on their itinerary, which was Hardinsburg, Kentucky.⁶¹ This old settlement, named for Captain William Hardin, a noted hunter and Indian fighter, was laid out in town lots in 1782 and incorporated in 1800. Certified court records reveal that there were several roads leading from Big Spring to Hardinsburg, however, in this case, it is believed the Lincolns followed the most direct route by way of the Lost Run road to Harned.⁶² From this point they likely pursued a straight course over what is now Federal Highway 60 to the town of Hardinsburg.

The community of Hardinsburg is rich in tradition regarding the Lincoln migration of 1816. One story of interest relates that the Lincoln party was delayed there on account of illness of one member of the family.⁶³ As certain phases of the tradition do not ring true to historic facts, this must necessarily be discounted. Another tradition brought forth by Logan Murray, a New York banker and native of Hardinsburg, has received considerable attention in several published works. This tradition relates that Colonel David R. Murray conversed with the Lincoln family while they stopped in the road in front of his house at Hardinsburg, and that his colored servant, Minerva, gave young Abraham milk at his doorstep. In the year 1860, this fact was recalled in the Murray home and

with his family including the little son Abraham Lincoln when he passed through Big Springs, Meade Co. . . . when he moved his family to Indiana about 1816." Affidavit of J. N. Tucker, March 1, 1930. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

⁶⁰ Affidavit of C. M. Williams (son of Lydia Ann Williams) January 9, 1931. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

⁶¹ The distance between Big Spring and Hardinsburg is approximately 20 miles.

⁶² The Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Indiana in its published report refers to the Lost Run Road as the Lost River Road. Both names are correct. Hall, *Lincoln Memorial Way Through Indiana*, 25.

⁶³ "John DeHaven [the uncle of Judge Matthias Miller] told him that the Lincolns spent two or three weeks at a small cabin at the south edge of Hardinsburg as they were moving to Indiana; that some one of the Lincoln party became ill and they remained there until this member of the family recovered, and that they received charity from the settlers in Hardinsburg." George L. Ridenour, "Brief In Behalf of the Route from Elizabethtown to Big Spring and Thence to Brandenburg, Crossing the Ohio at That Place," 21. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

both Colonel Murray and his aged woman servant remembered the occasion.⁶⁴

It has been suggested that Thomas Lincoln, while in the vicinity of Hardinsburg, left his westward course and traveled southeast into the remote interior of Breckinridge county to the Crume farm.⁶⁵ Here it is related the Lincoln family visited Mary Lincoln Crume, the eldest sister of Thomas Lincoln and her husband, Ralph Crume, before continuing on the last half of their journey. Such a visit would have required at least two days, and undoubtedly after the family had proceeded as far as Hardinsburg they were intent upon reaching their destination. If the Crume farm had been located on their route of travel, the pioneer home would unquestionably have been an important stop in their itinerary. It is not believed, however, that the Lincolns visited the Crumes in 1816.

Leaving Hardinsburg, the party turned to the left, after passing Fort Hardin, and followed the Yellow Banks Road in order to effect a direct route to their destination.⁶⁶ This ridge road avoided deep fords and continued westward to the Ohio River, where they were to find, after crossing the river, an established road in Indiana. It is not believed the migrating party would deviate from their course at this point to follow a road along the banks of the Ohio River because in the territory of what is now Hancock county, the Ohio bottoms vary in width from one to seven miles.⁶⁷ As it is thought the Ohio

⁶⁴ Warren, *Lincoln's Parentage and Childhood*, 293.

⁶⁵ Local traditions relate that the Crume farm was located about one and one-half miles north from Hudson, which is situated near the Hardin County boundary line. Affidavit of J. A. Quiggins, January 9, 1930; Affidavit of W. H. Tucker, January 10, 1930. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

The Crume farm is also referred to as being located near Fairfield in Breckinridge County in the vicinity of Hudson and Constantine. Affidavit of George Lucas, June 23, 1931. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

⁶⁶ "Mr. Matthias Miller, Hardinsburg, told Jo. C. Pell, Lewisport, in 1930, that the Lincolns came through Hardinsburg and turned to the left after passing Fort Hardin. This would put them on the Hardinsburg and Yellow-Banks Trail," Charles T. Baker, "The Route and Ferriage of The Lincolns" (typewritten manuscript), 2. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway of Kentucky.

⁶⁷ Lewis and Richard H. Collins, *History of Kentucky*, II, 304. See for Hancock County.

"This is to certify that William Clark, who was born about the year 1800, told me on many occasions that Thomas Lincoln and his family went down what was then the old Yellow Banks road when they migrated from Kentucky to Indiana. Mr. Clark lived practically all of his life in this section." Affidavit of R. H. Hatfield, January 29, 1932. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

"We, the undersigned citizens of Hancock County, Kentucky state, that on many occasions we have heard S. D. Lain say that his father, Lewis Lain, told him that Thomas Lincoln and his family passed down the Owensboro and Hardinsburg road on their way to Indiana. S. D. Lain was born in 1845, and was a resident of Hancock County all of his life. His father, Lewis Lain, was one of the first settlers in this part of the county." Affidavit of W. D. Basham and Victoria Lain Basham, January 22, 1932. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

"This is to certify that I have heard my father, John Nix, and also other old people talk of Thomas Lincoln and his family coming down the old Yellow Banks

was swollen by the fall rains in 1816, it is reasonable to believe the Lincolns would take a high ridge road away from the tributaries of the large and sinuous water course.

There is ample information to be found in the order books of the Breckinridge County Court regarding the road from Hardinsburg to Yellow Banks which was established at the beginning of the nineteenth century (1801). This old wagon road was an important artery of travel and was used by early Kentuckians in their migration to Indiana, Illinois and other territories or states. In traveling from Hardin and neighboring counties to Indiana and Illinois, this trail was usually selected as an established route of migration. It is to be supposed that many of the emigrant families, that the Lincoln party encountered while *en route* to Indiana, were traveling toward Shawneetown as their first point of destination in the Illinois country. Early documentary records are explicit in defining the road as being fifteen feet wide and numerous orders state that the road was to be reconstructed at certain points in order to facilitate travel.⁶⁸ Additional orders require that the road be maintained, indicating that the Yellow Banks Road was an important pioneer highway.

According to tradition the family on this segment of the journey traveled near the town of Patesville, passing within one and one half miles east of where the town now stands.⁶⁹ Located on their route in this vicinity was the home of William Pate, which is said to have been the only house on the road from Hardinsburg to what is now known as the

road [now known as the Owensboro and Hardinsburg road] as they went from Kentucky to Indiana." Affidavit of C. S. Nix, March 12, 1932. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

⁶⁸ There are nine attested copies of court orders, in the files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky, appointing overseers, their successors, *et cetera*, of the Yellow Banks road, dating from the years 1805 to 1812. This early evidence concerning the road was taken from Order book No. 2 of the Breckinridge County Court Clerk's office, which directs that the Yellow Banks road was to be kept in repair fifteen feet wide.

⁶⁹ "I am willing to say that having been a surveyor over a great part of Breckinridge and Hancock Counties for some 44 years, that I have had some knowledge of the roads in these counties and that for the last twenty years I have given a great deal of attention to the ministry of the Gospel in the Baptist Churches and the records of same, I am well acquainted with the history of western Breckenridge and Hancock Counties and from the records of Pisgah [now Mt. Pisgah] Church, the date given for its organization is 1797, and as Hardinsburg was organized in 1782, one a church community, the other a small town, I am not surprised when I see in the records of Breckinridge County as early as 1803 that the road leading from one to the other is styled as the old road, and I also know that the road so styled ran by Clover Creek Church and Mattingly and Pisgah Church in Breckinridge County, and to Patesville [or rather Wm. Pate's place] one and one-half miles east of where the town now stands, and on west by Bethlehem Church, crossing Horse Fork of Blackford Creek and on to Pellville, is styled in 1803 as the old Yellow Banks Road (which means Owensboro now). All these dates being prior to 1816 by at least 12 or 13 years, Lincoln's Caravan most likely took the well beaten track of the oldest road that led the direction he desired to go, that is to Spencer County, Indiana." Affidavit of F. M. C. Jolly, January 29, 1932. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

village of Pellville.⁷⁰ Here at the Pate home, according to early accounts, the Lincoln family spent the night, resuming their travel the next day.⁷¹ Another traditional story that is current in this community and which seems contradictory to the Pate-Lincoln tradition, because in all probability each story relates to the same date, is that the Lincoln family spent the night at the tavern of John Newton, located four miles east of Patesville, before continuing their journey.⁷²

Veering to the north, the party left the Yellow Banks Trail and proceeded through the sparsely settled country directly toward the Ohio River.⁷³ This last portion of their route through Kentucky was undoubtedly tiresome and uneventful, but all looked forward with buoyant spirits to the nearness of their approach to *La Belle Riviere*. Here young Abraham was to experience for the first time the crossing of an important boundary line, and the thrill of viewing for the first time the great stream, called by many the most beautiful river in the world.⁷⁴

The Lincoln party is believed to have approached the Kentucky side of the Ohio River, opposite or nearly opposite the mouth of Anderson Creek, a stream which flows into the Ohio from the Indiana side.⁷⁵ The nearest village across from the Kentucky bank was Troy, and there can be no doubt that their objective on the Indiana side was this part of southern Indiana. Troy was settled in 1811 and was the capital of

⁷⁰ "I have heard him [Solomon Abenchain] say that when he came to this place [1825] that the Pate place, near what is now Patesville, was the only house on the road from Hardinsburg, Ky., to where he located near Pellville, Ky." Affidavit of Sadie (Abenchain) Richardson, January 29, 1932. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

⁷¹ "Silas Taylor, who was a resident of this community many years ago, told me about 1880 that Minor E. Pate, who lived about one mile east of Patesville, told him that Thomas Lincoln and his family stopped at his father's home as they were going from Hodgenville, Ky., to Indiana." Affidavit of J. T. Pulliam, January 29, 1932. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

⁷² "This is to certify that Robert and Toll Newton, sons of John Newton, told me that their father told them that Thomas Lincoln and his family spent the night at his tavern, about four miles east of Patesville, Ky., when they migrated from Kentucky to Indiana. Also, Minor Pate told him that Thomas Lincoln and his family spent the night at his home, a short distance east of Patesville, as they migrated from Kentucky to Indiana." Affidavit of John A. Lynd, January 28, 1932. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

⁷³ The approximate distance, traveled by the Lincolns from Hardinsburg to the Ohio river, is about thirty-five or forty miles. No doubt two or three days were required to traverse this section of territory.

⁷⁴ "The best seasons for navigation on the Ohio River were Spring and Autumn; for if the journey was attempted in Winter, it was rendered dangerous by the floating ice, which made extra watchfulness very necessary, and if in Summer, the lowness of the waters caused much delay from the stranding of the boat on the sandbars. John Randolph was very nearly right when he described the Ohio as frozen one-half the year and dry the other half." Mary M. Feline, "Early Navigation Of The Ohio," *Leslie's Monthly*, October, 1888. There is no indication from early historical accounts that the Ohio River was frozen when the Lincolns crossed the stream in the late fall of 1816.

⁷⁵ "The Lincolns Crossing The Ohio", *Lincoln Lore*, No. 177, August 29, 1932.

Perry County. Considerable river traffic was carried on in this town, and here was located the nearest settlement to the Indiana Lincoln land.⁷⁶ In the campaign biography of Lincoln written in June, 1860, by Joseph H. Barrett, who likely obtained his information concerning the crossing of the Ohio by the Lincolns from Lincoln himself, the following information is given:

Arrived at the appointed landing on the banks of the Ohio, it only remained to embark the little caravan upon a flatboat, and to cross the stream, now swelled to fair proportions by the autumn rains. Finally, after reaching the Indiana side, the adventurers landed at or near the mouth of Anderson's creek, now the boundary between the counties of Perry and Spencer, about one hundred and forty miles below Louisville, by the river, and sixty above Evansville.⁷⁷

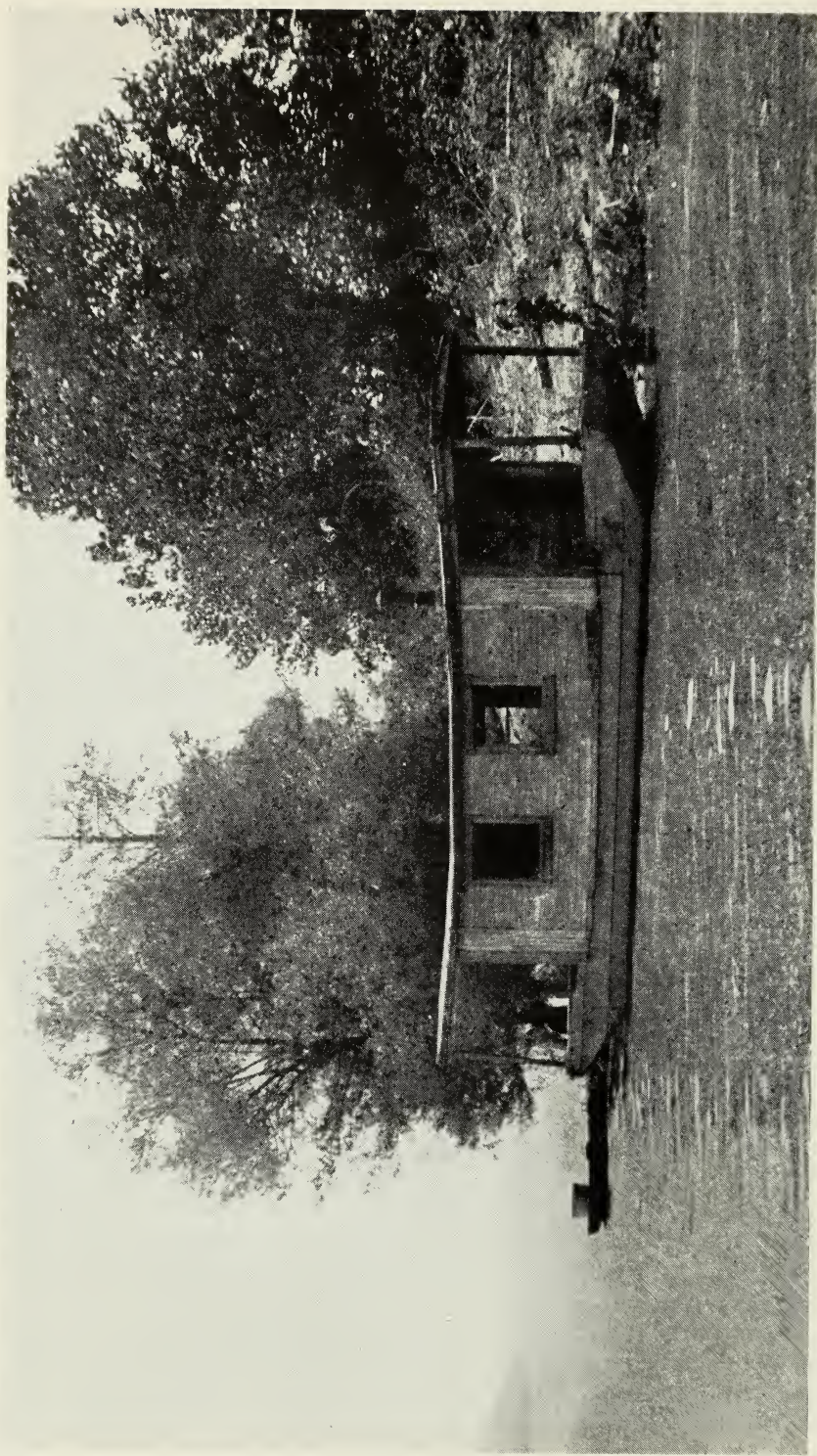
Nearly all of the early historians refer to Thompson's Ferry, which was operated on the Ohio in the vicinity of the mouth of Anderson Creek, as the location of the crossing of the Lincolns. Later biographers have adhered to the same conclusion. Records filed in the Breckinridge County Court house in Hardinsburg, Kentucky, reveal that a ferry was operated in the year 1816 on the Ohio River near the mouth of Anderson Creek called Thompson's Ferry. Other records mention the appointment of an overseer of a road from Thompson's Ferry towards Hardinsburg. One document dated January 16, 1815, suggests a change in a road so as to strike the Ohio River at Thompson's Ferry. On the committee selected to consider the change of route, the name of Hugh Thompson appears, which would suggest that he was the owner of the ferry. The date of this Breckinridge County Court record reveals that Thompson's Ferry was operated approximately two years before the 1816 migration,⁷⁸ a fact of which Thomas Lincoln no doubt was cognizant.

As the Ohio River crossing was the most exciting adventure of the entire Lincoln family migration of 1816, a voluminous amount of traditional stories are current concerning the event. Claims have been made, based on tradition, that the Lincolns crossed the Ohio River at practically every

⁷⁶ "Troy was the county seat of Perry County at the time the Lincolns migrated, and it is reasonable to expect that trails would lead to this town from different parts of the county. The town was surveyed as early as March, 1815, and ninety-six lots and a public square were laid off." Hall, *Lincoln Memorial Way Through Indiana*, 28.

⁷⁷ Barrett, *The Life Of Abraham Lincoln*, 22.

⁷⁸ *Lincoln Lore*, No. 177, August 29, 1932.



BOATHOUSE AT MOUTH OF ANDERSON CREEK (INDIANA)

This boathouse is at the approximate site of the ferry used by the Thomas Lincoln family when the crossing of the Ohio River was made in 1816. This photograph was taken about the year 1910.

Courtesy of Lincoln National Life Foundation,
Fort Wayne, Indiana.

ferry site from West Point to Owensboro on the Kentucky side of the river.⁷⁹ Corresponding claims have also been produced on the Indiana side of the Ohio, but after an exhaustive study by many historians of available data, the crossing at Thompson's Ferry appears to be, without a doubt, the location of the historic passage.

Upon the arrival of the Lincoln party at Thompson's Ferry, it is believed that other emigrating families were here waiting to be transported to the Indiana side.⁸⁰ Barrett in his Lincoln biography, speaks of the river as swollen "to fair proportions by the Autumn rains." If the river was at flood stage, it must be concluded that other parties were at the river

⁷⁹ The ferries from West Point to Owensboro on the Ohio River that have received considerable study in connection with the Lincoln migration to Indiana in 1816, but which are necessarily discarded in favor of the Thompson Ferry near the mouth of Anderson Creek are:

Henry Goosenberry's Ferry (Boone's Ferry at Boone's Ford), 2½ miles west of West Point, Ky.
 Norris Ferry (Sturgin's Ferry), 8 miles northwest of Tip Top, Ky.
 Brandenburg Ferry, Brandenburg, Ky.
 Doup's Ferry, 1 mile west of Brandenburg, Ky.
 Weatherholt Ferry, Town of Cloverport, Ky.
 Sandy Creek Landing (from mouth of Blackford Creek to mouth of Sandy Creek), 12 miles below the mouth of Anderson Creek.

The Lincoln traditions concerning the Weatherholt Ferry have become firmly imbedded in the minds of many persons, and today numerous residents living along the Ohio River in the vicinity of Cloverport emphatically maintain the contention that the Lincolns crossed the Ohio River at that place. In consideration of the established facts of history and because of some questionable conditions concerning the tradition and the documentary evidence produced, both as to origin and discovery, the entire claim is necessarily discarded and not considered in this study. The Weatherholt document upon which all claims are based is dated August 29, 1866, which was written by Jacob Weatherholt Jr. [son of Jacob Weatherholt, Sr.], and which is alleged to have been found several years ago, relates in part the following information: "My father, Jacob Weatherholt, Jr., [Sr.] ferried Thomas Lincoln and family, wife Nancy, daughter, Sarah, and son, Abraham, age eight years, from the Hills of Kentucky to Indiana, [and also property] consisting of a yoke of oxen, a cow, a cart, and some camping outfit by canoe and raft of logs from what is now Clover Creek [Cloverport] Ky., to Indiana, and landed on land and camped overnight on land, I now own and hold deed for reference and next day made his way down the Indiana banks of the Ohio by Indian trails and paths and camped the second night at what is known as Rock Island, where General Lafayette was recked in 1825, and then made way to his New Indiana Home where he had taken up a Federal land claim before at Vincennes. . . ." The original of this document was found attached to Deed Book A, Page 9, in the recorders office at the Perry County, Indiana, Court House in Cannelton, Indiana, attached to the margin of a deed from Jacob Weatherholt, Sr., to Jacob Weatherholt, Jr., transferring 52 acres of land located at what is now Tobinsport, Indiana. The Corydon Indiana Lincoln Highway Association, "A Brief on The Route of Thomas Lincoln through Indiana To Lincoln City; includes numerous Weatherholt references; George L. Ridenour, Briefs In Behalf Of The Route from Elizabethtown To Big Spring And Thence To Brandenburg, Crossing The Ohio River At That Place" (includes numerous Weatherholt references). Files of Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

The traditions relative to the Sandy Creek Landing are also of unusual interest: "The Murphy Brothers [Allen, Jr., Edward, Ethan, Zeb and Taylor] ferried the Lincoln party in a woodboat and the Lincoln family camped two days at the woodyard before continuing on their journey to their new home. They had a cart drawn by oxen, a cow and a saddle horse. The woodyard was at the mouth of Little Sandy Creek, Indiana, nearly opposite the mouth of Blackford Creek, in Kentucky." *WHY THE STORY OF THE CROSSING POINT HAS BEEN KEPT HIDDEN*.

"The Murphys were slave traders . . . for [this] reason, the Lincolns and the Rays and all the families connected with them by marriage refused to tell where the ferriage actually was so as not to divulge the contact with this family whose business and general character was so undesirable." Charles T. Baker, "The Route and Ferriage Of The Lincolns" (typewritten manuscript). 2-4. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

⁸⁰ The boundary line between Kentucky and Indiana is the low water mark of the Ohio River on the Indiana side. A ferry across the Ohio River would infer that a road continued from the river on the Indiana side.

bank. Traditions relate that eleven families, in addition to the Lincoln party, constituted the waiting group, while others say that fifteen families were waiting to cross the river. Sixty-one souls are said to have constituted the caravan, and that two days were required to transport them to the Indiana side.⁸¹ While the above traditions cannot be authenticated, it must be true that the river crossing did require considerable time, and, if the Ohio was at flood stage, it would have necessitated a prolonged delay. Likewise, such a delay stopping ferry traffic would have caused many people to congregate at the point to await favorable ferrying conditions.

All types of river craft are said to have been used for the ferriage of the Lincoln family to Indiana. Log rafts have been mentioned by several as the mode of conveyance across the Ohio, however, if early court records regarding the establishment of ferries are to be followed, it is believed certain regulations were to be compiled with to legally operate a licensed ferry. These requirements usually prescribed the kind and size of boat to be used, the number of operators and the fare to be charged for persons, animals and vehicles. The ferry-keeper was also required to give bond. An ancient document establishing a ferry in the year 1804, taken from the files of the Hardin County Court records, ordered that twenty-five cents was to be charged for the ferriage of man and horse.⁸² For a horse only twelve and one-half cents was to be charged and this amount also applied to a footman. The said ferry-keeper was required to keep a boat of sufficient

⁸¹ "In conclusion, I wish to give you an example of the manner of collecting this tradition and to give the reason for Brockett and Barrett using the word 'caravan'. In October, 1930, Mrs. W. T. Mastin, of Owensboro, Ky., hearing of my research efforts, wrote me and asked for information concerning a branch of her ancestral family that came into this county with the Lincolns, and remained a short time and then moved to Missouri. She claims to have read documentary evidence to substantiate the family history.

"L. D. Jones, a grandson of Ed Murphy who helped ferry the Lincolns, was asked if other families came with the Lincolns, and stated that several families did and among them was the family of David Bristow, with six children. In answer to the question, 'Are descendants now in the county?' he replied, 'No, they staid a short time and then went to Missouri.'

"J. W. Ferguson, a grandson of John S. Lamar (born 1794, died Nov. 25, 1835, buried at Old Pigeon, came to Indiana in 1809) remembered hearing of others coming with the Lincolns, and one family remained a short time and moved to Missouri.

"G. B. Enghof, a grandson of Betsy Ray Grigsby, also states he has heard his grand-mother tell of other families coming with the Lincolns, and that one family soon afterward moved to Missouri.

"In this tradition gathered I have eleven families of the caravann, besides the Lincolns, spoken of by Mrs. Mastin, who states there were fifteen.

"In 1927, the L. D. Jones above mentioned said the Lincolns camped two days at the woodyard before continuing their journey to Padgett Hill, where they built their 'open face camp' and spent the first winter. It required two days to ferry this 'caravan' of sixty-one people." Baker, "The Route And Ferriage of The Lincolns," 3. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

⁸² The Solomon Brandenburg Ferry (Brandenburg, Ky.) was established by an order of the Hardin County Court of Hardin County, Kentucky, on the 17th day of December, 1804. Hardin County Court Records, November Term, 1804, 530.

size for the transporting of a wagon and four horses, and was ordered to keep two able-bodied ferrymen to operate the boat. It is believed that the Thompson Ferry was a legally operated, licensed enterprise and that its requirements and fares were similar to the Hardin County regulations. Such were the conditions of ferryboat transportation in the year 1816 when the Lincolns moved to Indiana.

It must have been a dramatic scene when Thomas Lincoln's frightened horses pulled their pioneer wagon upon the Thompson ferryboat. Before moving away from the bank, the horses were likely uncoupled from the wagon to prevent an accident in case they might become unmanageable in mid-stream. If several head of cattle were driven along, two trips may have been required to remove the Lincoln family's worldly possessions to the opposite bank. It is to be supposed that Nancy Hanks was apprehensive of the impending danger of this water passage, while Thomas Lincoln was busy quieting his horses and promoting all necessary safety measures in effecting a safe crossing. Sarah and Abraham must have enjoyed most of the trip to the fullest extent. It was with a sigh of relief that the Indiana shore was reached, for then the most hazardous portion of the journey was completed.⁸³

Upon arriving within the boundaries of Indiana, the Lincolns must have looked forward with fervent interest to the culmination of their trip. Here all men were free, here land titles were secure, here rapid development was to increase property values and here Thomas Lincoln had surely resolved to build up a landed estate, approaching in size the large acreage of his father's former holdings in Kentucky. Certainly, the family must have wondered how rich their Indiana land would be, how its topographical features would compare with their Kentucky farms and where they would erect their future cabin home. This new country must have brought forth from every member of the family excited ejaculations as they drove over the wagon trail which meant the last sixteen miles of their long journey.⁸⁴

⁸³ "During the interval of fourteen years from 1816, the time when the Lincolns arrived in Indiana, and 1830, the date on which they left the state, the commonwealth had grown from fifteen counties to fifty-eight counties. When the Lincolns arrived in 1816 there were but 63,000 people in Indiana, but by the year 1830 when they left, there were 341,582 inhabitants in the state." Hall, *Lincoln Memorial Way Through Indiana*, 17. The territory of Indiana was admitted to the Union on December 11, 1816.

⁸⁴ Tarbell, *In The Footsteps Of The Lincolns*, 118.

After leaving the Thompson ferryboat landing near Troy, Thomas Lincoln traveled over what was then called the Vincennes-Troy Road, which was one of the earliest trails used in approaching the old land office at Vincennes. This trail is now known as the Santa Fe Road, and it is believed the Lincolns followed this route from the mouth of Anderson Creek to a point near their Spencer county farm. Today this route from Troy would cross Anderson Creek over Highway 66, to a point where the old Santa Fe Trail veers north and north-west. Following this road in a general northwesterly direction through Santa Claus, the route converges on Highway 162 near the site of the Lincoln home, now called the Nancy Hanks Lincoln State Park, at Lincoln City, Indiana.⁸⁵ Here ended the Lincoln migration of 1816, and marked as well the beginning of an important and significant phase of the life of the sixteenth president of the United States.

Considerable discussion has ensued concerning the number of days required to make the migration. Numerous Lincoln biographers have stated that the overland trip required approximately one week to reach the Lincolns' Indiana destination. One campaign biography of Lincoln of 1864 states that seven days were required to complete the journey.⁸⁶ Such conclusions are not thought to be correct. As a crow flies, the Knob Creek home was located about seventy-five or eighty miles south-east from the river town of Troy, and the total mileage of their circuitous route of travel, from their home in Kentucky to their destination in Indiana, is believed to be approximately one hundred twenty-five miles.⁸⁷ While it

⁸⁵ Hall *et al*, *Lincoln Memorial Way Through Indiana*, 63.

"They experienced some difficulty in making their way from this point (Santa Claus) to the quarter section of land on which Thomas Lincoln intended to settle." Warren, "The Environs of Lincoln's Youth," *Abraham Lincoln Association papers*, 1933, 132.

"Two days, at the very least, it must have taken to reach the knoll which the father had selected several weeks earlier; no road whatever existed, and only a trail, Blazed out part of the way By a Man By the [name] of Jesse Hoskins, served to guide them. The Balance of the way . . . Lincoln had to cut his way, writes Dennis Hanks. So Thomas felled trees, cut underbrush and vines and made openings through which the oxen could drag the sled or wagon forward. Over stumps and rocks, across gullies, bogs, mounds and soggy ground, they crept onward and, finally, reached the spot 'Rite in the Brush,' where Abraham Lincoln was to spend the next fourteen years". Albert J. Beveridge, *Abraham Lincoln, I, 1809-1858*, 42.

⁸⁶ "After a seven day's journey through an uninhabited country, their resting place at night being a blanket spread upon the ground, they arrived at the spot selected for their future residence. . . ." T. B. Peterson, and Brothers, *Life and Public Services of Abraham Lincoln*, 25.

⁸⁷ "In a straight line Troy is about 75 miles to the northwest of the Knob Creek home." Tarbell. *In The Footsteps of Abraham Lincoln*, 116.

The approximate distances between the various points on the migration itinerary: Knob Creek to Elizabethtown, 18 miles; Elizabethtown to Mill Creek, 12 miles; Mill Creek to Big Spring, 12 miles; Big Spring to Hardinsburg, 20 miles; Hardinsburg to Ohio River, 40 miles (not a direct route); Ohio River to the Lincoln Indiana Home, 16 miles.

is true that under favorable traveling conditions the journey could have been completed in seven days over the pioneer trails, nevertheless, stops are believed to have been made at numerous points along the route, and it is to be supposed that they visited several days with relatives in the course of their western travel. There is no indication of any attempt on the part of Thomas Lincoln to reach Indiana within a limited number of days. It is believed that the family proceeded leisurely along the way at a moderate rate of travel. That the migration required approximately ten days to two weeks time with at least one week spent in actual travel is a fair conclusion.

As many western caravans penetrated into more remote sections of the old Northwest, it has been confusing to some as to the reasons for the comparatively short migration made by the Lincolns in their move from Kentucky to Indiana. It must be remembered that until after 1816, few colonists went far beyond the Ohio into either Indiana or Illinois. Thomas Lincoln's decision to move from Kentucky was a bold and decisive step, but the distance he traveled away from the disturbed slave state was of little consequence. It has been suggested that Thomas Lincoln was influenced in selecting the state of Indiana as a future home by Azel W. Dorsey. This pioneer was a Hardin county farmer before moving to Indiana, and after residing in that state he became one of Abraham Lincoln's schoolmasters. In the year 1811, while living in Kentucky, Dorsey enlisted as a member of Captain Benjamin Shacklett's company of the Third Regiment of the Kentucky Detached Militia and engaged in the battle of Tippecanoe. In the War of 1812 he was a member of Capt. Solomon Brandenburg's company of the Third Regiment and he again traveled through the Indiana territory.⁸⁸ It is to be supposed that upon his returns to Kentucky from these military expeditions, he related glowing accounts concerning the new

⁸⁸ Shacklett's Company, War Department-Adjutant General's Office Correspondence, April 30, 1931.

Brandenburg's Company, *Roster of Volunteer Officers of 1812*, 52 and 53, Capt. Solomon Brandenburg's Company of the Third Regiment, detached militia, in Library of Kentucky State Historical Society of Frankfort, Kentucky, and copy on file with the Filson Club of Louisville, Kentucky; General Samuel Hopkin's report to the Governor of Kentucky on file with the Kentucky State Historical Society and quoted in the *History of Indiana* by John B. Dillon.

The above information and references, pertaining to Azel W. Dorsey's military expeditions, were taken from the *Brief in Behalf of the Route From Elizabethtown to Big Spring and Thence to Brandenburg, Crossing the Ohio River at That Place*, prepared by George L. Ridenour. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

"Canaan". It is claimed that on both of his military expeditions he crossed the Ohio river at the Brandenburg Ferry. Some historians maintain that Thomas Lincoln, after being influenced by Dorsey to move to Indiana, secured from him information as to the route which he had followed. While it may be true that Lincoln was interested in the accounts of Indiana as related by Dorsey, there is no good reason why he should go so far as to follow the same route of travel as his destination was in a different direction.

Thomas Lincoln's older brother, Josiah, migrated from Kentucky to Indiana at an earlier date than the parents of the future president.⁸⁹ He located in Harrison County, and it is believed that his residence there undoubtedly influenced Thomas Lincoln to migrate also. It is not believed, however, that Thomas Lincoln traveled through Harrison County, on his removal, to visit his brother whose home was located northwest of Corydon.⁹⁰ An interesting but erroneous tradition relates that when Thomas Lincoln was moving to his new home in Indiana, one of his horses, due to the strenuous trip, "broke down" and apparently was not able to continue farther on the journey. The horse became lame while the Lincolns were at the home of Josiah, and it is stated that Thomas Lincoln traded his fatigued horse to his brother for one in good condition. The tradition further relates that the horse for which Josiah had swapped, turned out to be one of the best animals he had ever owned.⁹¹ By referring to a map of Kentucky and Indiana, one must immediately conclude that Thomas Lincoln would not have traveled so far out of his way in winter weather to visit his brother and family, as his destination was in a northwesterly direction. Such a circuitous route to their Perry county land would have considerably increased the total mileage of the migration.

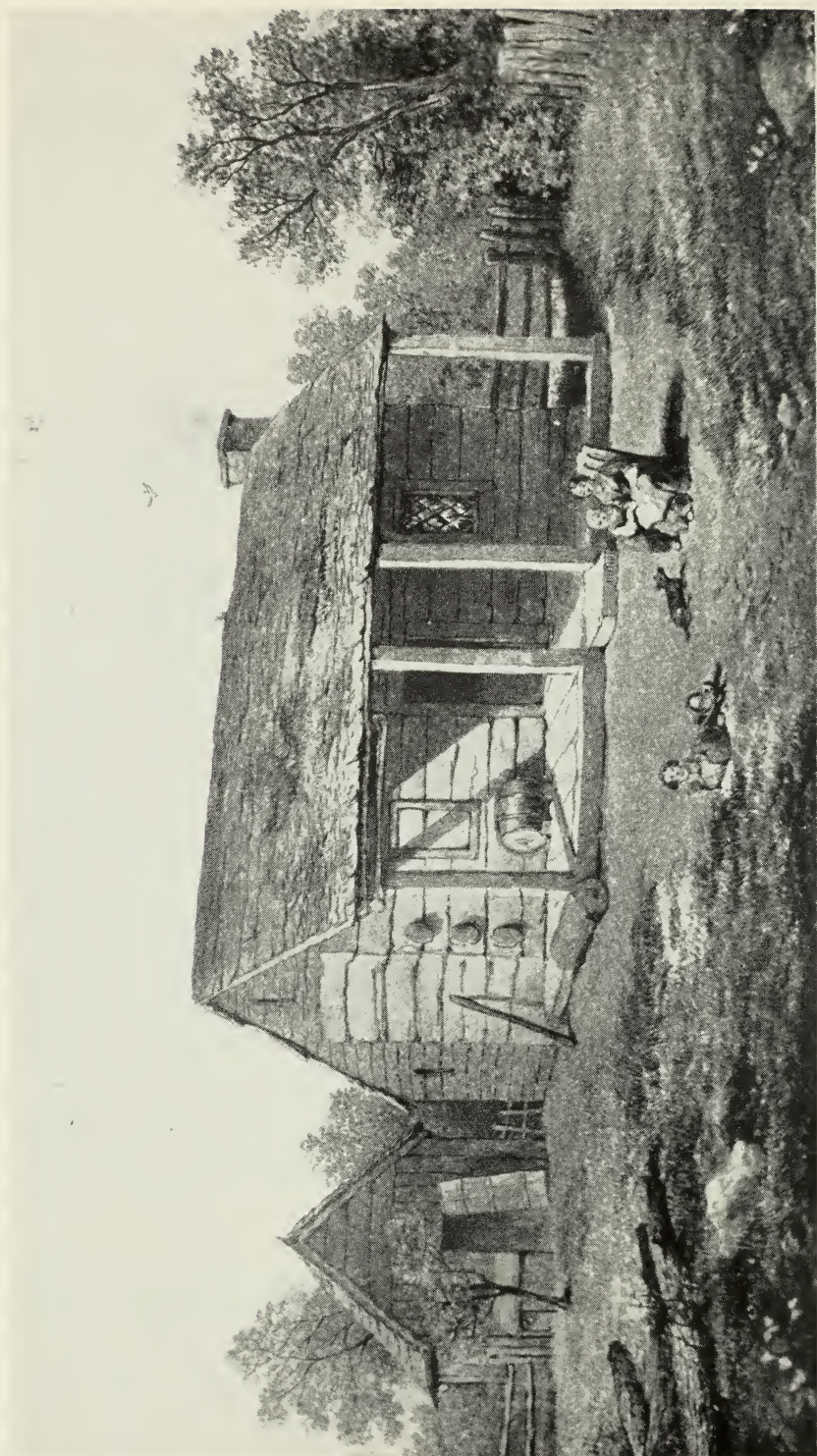
When the Lincolns located their new home in Indiana, they could have been influenced in moving to Perry, now

⁸⁹ William E. Barton, *The Lineage of Lincoln*, 79.

⁹⁰ In 1804, a petition was filed in the Hardin County Court, asking for the establishment of a road from Elizabethtown to the Ohio River. This petition was signed by a number of Hardin County citizens, including Thomas Lincoln. Among other signers was Ignatius Able, who afterwards became a resident of Harrison County, Indiana. As a result of the establishment of this road and because of the removal of Ignatius Able to Harrison County, it is believed by some that Thomas Lincoln traveled this newly established road to Harrison County enroute to his Perry County farm.

The Corydon Indiana Lincoln Highway Association, *A Brief on the Route of Thomas Lincoln Through Indiana to Lincoln City*, 2. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.

⁹¹ Affidavit of Jacob L. Summers, May 14, 1931. Files of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky.



THE INDIANA LINCOLN CABIN (NOT EXTANT)

The water-colored, lithographed drawing was made by John H. Rowbothom, and the photograph was made from the drawing. Mr. Rowbothom, an artist, was employed by Moore, Wilstach & Baldwin of Cincinnati, publishers of Joseph H. Barrett's *Life of Lincoln*, to prepare the drawing for that work. Mr. Rowbothom visited the scenes of Lincoln's childhood in 1865, and was, in reality, the first man to penetrate the Lincoln areas of Kentucky and Indiana in search of Lincoln material. Mr. Rowbothom's drawing of the Indiana cabin of the Lincoln family is undoubtedly a picture of the real home of the Lincolns. See Jesse W. Weik, *The Real Lincoln*, 19; Joseph H. Barrett, *Life of Lincoln*, 40 (opposite page).

Courtesy of Lincoln National Life Foundation,
Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Spencer, County (established in 1818) by Austin Lincoln a relative and friend of the President's father.⁹² The farm of Austin Lincoln was located about twelve miles from Thomas Lincoln's Indiana tract, and while making the journey from Kentucky to Indiana in 1816, they passed Austin Lincoln's homestead, *en route* to their new home site on Little Pigeon Creek.⁹³ Austin Lincoln was a son of Hananiah Lincoln, with whom Thomas Lincoln had lived for some time in Kentucky, in Hardin and Cumberland counties. Austin Lincoln was in Perry County, Indiana, as early as June, 1815, more than a year before Thomas Lincoln arrived, and he entered his land claim in the Vincennes Land Office on December 16, 1816, for his Perry county farm. About the year 1820, Davis Lincoln, a brother of Austin Lincoln, migrated from Kentucky to Perry county, Indiana, and it is believed that several sisters accompanied him to his new home. Members of the Boone family some of whom, it seems, had intermarried with the Lincolns, also migrated to Indiana at an earlier date. In this new community in Indiana, therefore, Thomas Lincoln found relatives and friends already established in their homes.⁹⁴

In the Indiana cabin on Little Pigeon Creek, Abraham Lincoln spent fourteen formative years. During this period he experienced happiness, tragedy and hardship but Indiana educated, trained and nurtured his superior intellect, and when he migrated to Illinois in the year 1830, he was prepared to move on to outstanding achievement, eventually leading to non-paralleled statesmanship.⁹⁵

⁹² "It is my opinion that Austin Lincoln was largely responsible for the coming of Thomas to Indiana and for his choice of the particular tract of land which he occupied." Louis A. Warren, "Hananiah Lincoln in Revolution and Pioneer History." *Indiana Magazine of History* (March, 1929), XXV, 37.

⁹³ Hall, *The Lincoln Memorial Way Through Indiana*, 28.

⁹⁴ "They were joined in the fall of 1817 by three relatives from Kentucky, Thomas and Betsy Sparrow, and with them a cousin of Nancy, Dennis Hanks by name, a boy about ten years older than Abraham." Tarbell, *In the Footsteps of the Lincolns*, 123.

⁹⁵ For information regarding the 1830 migration of the Lincoln family from Indiana to Illinois, see the published report of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Indiana, *The Lincoln Memorial Way Through Indiana*, already cited in this paper.

"The caravan which moved from Indiana to Illinois in the year 1830, although it included Abraham Lincoln, was largely a migration of the Johnstons. Of the thirteen members of the party but two of them were Lincolns—Abraham and his father. The others consisted of Sarah Johnston Lincoln, her three children, her five grandchildren and her two sons-in-law." The members were:

Thomas Lincoln, age 54
Sarah Johnston Lincoln, age 42
Abraham Lincoln, age 21
John D. Johnston, age 15
Dennis F. Hanks, age 31
Elizabeth Johnston Hanks, age 23
John Hanks, age 8
Sarah Hanks, age 7
Nancy Hanks, age 5
Harriet Hanks, age 4

A story concerning the events and route of travel of an obscure journey made by humble participants one hundred and twenty-one years ago must necessarily be based on fact and tradition. Exhaustive studies concerning the Lincoln family have developed a few essential facts upon which a story, of the Lincoln migration of 1816 can be based. Local traditions have been relied upon for additional information. It has been said that tradition is subject to all the infirmities of memory and misunderstanding, and no doubt many of the hundreds of affidavits that are on file, and the numerous oral accounts that are today current concerning the westward movement of the Lincoln family are erroneous and unreliable. Nevertheless, in a community which abounds in Lincoln lore and tradition, as does the Kentucky Lincoln country, such legendary recitals must be recognized and accepted in part. In preparing this article the author has studied hundreds of original stories and affidavits that have been collected in regard to the route of travel of the Lincoln family to Indiana. In regard to some roads and some localities, the events of the journey are historically correct and authentic, while on other sections of the route the accounts of the travelers are vague and fragmentary. It would be an impossible task to define the complete route traveled by the Lincoln family from Knob Creek to Little Pigeon Creek, however, from available facts, the principal points of their itinerary, and the important events of their journey are now recorded and are a part of accepted *Lincolniana*.

Squire Hall, age —
Matilda Johnston Hall, age 19
John Hall, age 2.

Lincoln Lore, No. 7, May 27, 1929.

Addenda

In the development of America's great system of highways, there has been advocated for many years a proposal to build a memorial way through Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois which would connect the different communities associated with the life of Abraham Lincoln. The constantly increasing number of patriotic, historically minded people seeking out Abraham Lincoln's birthplace at Hodgenville, Kentucky; the Knob Creek home in Kentucky; the spot where he lived for fourteen years in Indiana; the New Salem, Illinois, community; and the homes, buildings, and sites associated with his life in Springfield, Illinois, have attracted the attention of road building departments of the three commonwealths.

Not only has it been advocated that the Lincoln shrines should be connected by one highway, but to those making a Lincoln pilgrimage, the desire is keenly felt to travel between these points over the same route which the Lincolns traveled. The question, "which way did the Lincolns go?", has resulted in extensive studies concerning the different Lincoln migrations in the three states. Governors of Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois have on different occasions signified their interest in promoting such a highway, and commissioners have been appointed to designate the route of travel. Today there are on file in the archives of the three states reports relative to the route of migration of the Lincoln family from the birthplace to the tomb of the martyred sixteenth President.

At the present time it appears that interest in this tri-state project is on the wane, and likely many years will elapse before the memorial way will be a completed reality. Undoubtedly this highway will eventually be built, and with the revival of interest concerning the project the historical background concerning the Lincoln migrations will prove to be of interest. The final Report of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky, concerning the Lincolns' route of travel to Indiana has received little publicity, and for that reason is incorporated in this study.

REPORT OF THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL HIGHWAY
COMMISSION OF KENTUCKY

Hon. Ruby Laffoon,
Governor of Kentucky,
Frankfort, Kentucky.

Your commission realizes that after a lapse of more than a century it is impossible to locate with absolute certainty the route traveled by Thomas Lincoln with his family in 1816 from their home in Hardin (now LaRue) County, Kentucky, to their future home in what is now Spencer County, Indiana. We have not hoped to satisfy the public at large. Not even the commission is a unit on all the Report as submitted. Among the hundreds of traditional affidavits submitted to the commission, it is rather easy to select those that should be considered evidence when studied and compared with other facts. We believe the great majority of these affidavits were submitted in good faith and we want to express our thanks to all who earnestly and honestly expressed their claims.

Even the court records which are complete and abundant in regard to the opening and upkeep of roads in the early days are confusing. Like the calls in early land surveys, their land marks were of a temporary nature. The identity of the farms and plantations they passed has been lost. The "black jack groves," the "maple swamps," the meadows and the barrens that constituted the field notes have long since disappeared. In some cases even the names of the smaller streams have been changed. Yet the salient features of the traditions and road records, taken into consideration with other facts, make the location rather satisfactory when associated with the scant recorded history. In the following report, references will be indicated to the material so that interested students may have easy access to the documentary facts upon which this report is based.

Your commission was impressed with the importance of its task and entered upon its labors with an ambition to find if possible, the actual route over which Thomas Lincoln and his family traveled in their migration. It has tried to avoid being influenced by the selfishness and ambitions of individuals and communities, and has based its findings on the following considerations:

First—The reasonableness of the route as determined by distances, directions available roads, and natural attractions, such as friends and kindred to be visited before undertaking such a journey.

Second—Traditions existing in various communities traversed as shown by sworn affidavits of responsible citizens.

Third—Certified court records as to the opening and upkeep of the roads.

Fourth—Recorded history.

Upon this basis the Lincolns' journey as finally determined naturally divides itself into six sections.

First—From the birthplace of Abraham on the South Fork of Nolin River to the Knob Creek home.

Second—From the Knob Creek home to Elizabethtown.

Third—From Elizabethtown to the Mill Creek home of the mother of Thomas, Bersheba Lincoln, and his sister, Mrs. William Brumfield.

Fourth—From Mill Creek to Big Spring.

Fifth—From Big Spring to Hardinsburg.

Sixth—From Hardinsburg to the Ohio River.

Section I

FROM THE BIRTHPLACE WHERE THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL NOW STANDS TO KNOB CREEK.

Thomas Lincoln moved in the year 1811 from the farm on the South Fork of Nolin River where Abraham was born February 12, 1809, to the Knob Creek farm. While there is no evidence filed with the commission to prove any particular route on this section, it is a well established fact that the Nolin-Bardstown road (now U. S. 31 E) was then in existence. He would naturally follow that road through what is now Hodgenville to their new home, the place that remained their home until the fall of 1816 when they moved to what is now Spencer County, Indiana. It was from this home that the future President attended his first school, taught by Zachariah Riney and Caleb Hazel and where the foundations of his character were laid, amid the rugged hills and babbling brooks of primitive nature.

Section II

FROM THE KNOB CREEK HOME TO ELIZABETHTOWN.

This section meets all the requirements as the Elizabethtown-Springfield road was the most direct road between the

Knob Creek home and Elizabethtown. Certified road records in the Hardin County Court House show that it was opened and kept in repair from 1793 until the time of the migration in the year 1816. Local tradition has it that this was the road traveled by Thomas Lincoln when he went to Springfield to be married and over which he returned to Elizabethtown in the year 1806 with his bride, Nancy Hanks. It was, and is yet, a ridge road with no streams to cross, being located on the divide between Nolin River on the south and the Rolling Fork of Salt River on the north. This route is amply supported by traditional affidavits made by reliable people whose families have lived in this (Elizabethtown) territory from the earliest days. Historically, according to Dr. Louis A. Warren, it is "probably the road followed by the Lincolns."

Section III

FROM ELIZABETHTOWN TO MILL CREEK

This section is the only one on the entire route on which Thomas Lincoln turned from the direct course to his destination. This route over what is now the Shepherdsville road, at that time was called Bullitt's Salt Lick road. This road ran by the farm of Thomas Lincoln, now called the Mill Creek farm.

The Shepherdsville road was selected by the commission as being the most available road to reach the home of his mother, Bersheba Lincoln, widow of the pioneer Abraham Lincoln, the grandfather of the President.

This section carries us not only to the site of the home of his mother, but also to the old Mill Creek cemetery, the final resting place of Bersheba Lincoln and her youngest daughter, Mrs. William Brumfield, as well as many other descendants of this worthy pioneer mother.

This place should be made a national shrine to the memory of this pioneer mother who, from the time her husband fell a victim to a savage bullet in 1786 until 1803 held her orphan family of three sons and two daughters together amid the vicissitudes and hardships of pioneer life.

This particular section of country is rich in early social, commercial, political and religious history. The location of this road is established by court records, traditional affidavits,

the substance of which was secured forty years ago, before the subject of a memorial highway was under consideration.

Section IV

FROM MILL CREEK TO BIG SPRING

After his visit with his mother and sister at the Brumfield home Thomas Lincoln traveled directly west on the road leading through "Viney Grove" (now the town of Vine Grove) and on through Flaherty to Big Spring.

It is a peculiar fact that of the four routes suggested to the commissioners leading out of Elizabethtown all terminated at Big Spring. It seems that at that early date Big Spring was one of the important towns in the county. Tradition shows that all the emigrants on their trek to the then rapidly developing west, passed through and usually camped at Big Spring.

The road selected for this section meets the necessary requirements laid down in our schedule of premises. It was the most direct route as it avoided deep streams, and was under constant upkeep, and is amply supported by traditional affidavits.

Section V

FROM BIG SPRING TO HARDINSBURG

The county officials and other interested citizens of Breckinridge County furnished certified court records showing that there were different roads leading from Big Spring to Hardinsburg. The commission selected what, in their opinion, is the best and most direct route. It follows what is known locally as the "Lost Run" road to Harned Station on Federal Highway No. 60 and then along that Highway to and through Hardinsburg.

Section VI

FROM HARDINSBURG TO THE OHIO RIVER

The Yellow Banks road, later called the Owensboro road, leads from Hardinsburg in almost a direct line towards the

Lincolns' destination. It is a ridge road avoiding deep fords, and the Ohio River crossing put the party beyond any deep streams and on an established road in Indiana.

This route is supported by scores of affidavits as to the traditional passage of this party, that bear all the earmarks of truth and much of it was developed before a memorial road was under consideration.

Many certified court records from Breckinridge County show that this road had been established and was kept in repair from 1801 up to the time of the migration. All the records show that the road was kept in repair fifteen feet wide continuously.

As to recorded history:

L. P. Brockett, *Life and Times of Abraham Lincoln*," 38. The crossing is placed "at or near the mouth of Anderson Creek."

Joseph H. Barrett, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*, 22. The writer makes the same location.

John G. Nicolay and John Hay make the same location.

Louis A. Warren, *Parentage and Childhood of Lincoln*, 294. The same location is quoted.

W. M. Thayer, in *The Pioneer Boy*, puts them across the river on Thompson's Ferry at the mouth of Anderson Creek.

So also other biographers place the crossing at Thompson's Ferry. These include Holland, Lamon, Herndon, Tarbell, and Barton.

Were this commission to ignore all this historical background it would succeed only in laying itself open to ridicule by competent Lincoln biographers.

While it is not practical at this time to carry this memorial highway to the actual point of crossing of the Ohio, on account of the unfavorable terrain, and physical characteristics of the river, we believe the best and most reasonable thing to do is to locate the route over the old Yellow Banks road from Hardinsburg through Breckinridge and Hancock Counties to Pellville, and there to turn to the Ohio River at Hawesville and connect with the terminus of the Indiana division as located by that State's commission. This is the most

practical bridge site, and *this location* is in near proximity to the site of the actual crossing.*

Signed:

J. R. Miller, Commissioner from Meade County
Porter H. Hodges, Commissioner from Hancock County
Frank Dean, Commissioner from Breckinridge County
D. E. McClure, Commissioner from Hardin County
R. Gerald McMurtry, Commissioner from Hardin Co.

“Accepted and Approved”

RUBY LAFFOON, *Governor*

December 5, 1935

ACCEPTANCE OF THE KENTUCKY COMMISSION'S REPORT

The report of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission concerning the route and location of the proposed Lincoln Memorial Highway through Kentucky was “accepted and approved” by Governor Ruby Laffoon before he retired from office. The report was submitted by Judge J. R. Miller, Commissioner from Meade County; Porter H. Hodges,* Commissioner from Hancock County; Frank Dean, Commissioner from Breckinridge County; and Dr. D. E. McClure and R. Gerald McMurtry, Commissioners from Hardin County. Other members of the commission are Judge John P. Hasewell, Commissioner from Breckinridge County; and Judge Otis Mather, Commissioner from LaRue County.

In approving the report the Governor said:

I wish to express to the commission my appreciation for the careful research and painstaking study embodied in the details of your report. It is my hope that the proper plans will eventually be made for the acquisition of the needed right-of-way, and the construction of the Lincoln Memorial Highway as outlined in your report.

* Notes: a. Study of the Lincoln migration of 1816 does not include the removal of the Lincoln family in the year 1811 from the birthplace farm on the South Fork of Nolin River to the Lincoln farm on Knob Creek.

b. The Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Kentucky designated the location on the Ohio River where the Lincolns are believed to have crossed the stream. The remaining sixteen mile route of the journey of 1816 was determined by the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission of Indiana.

* Note. Porter H. Hodges, Commissioner from Hancock County, died August 8, 1937.

THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL HIGHWAY ROUTE
ON THE PRIMARY SYSTEM OF ROADS IN THE
COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY

After the acceptance and approval by Governor Ruby Laffoon, of the Report Of The Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission Of Kentucky, a bill was introduced in the Kentucky Legislature during the regular session of the year 1936, establishing the route of the Lincoln Memorial Highway as part of the primary system of highways in the commonwealth. This bill along with numerous other highway measures became a law after the period prescribed by law, without the signature of Hon. A. B. Chandler, Governor of Kentucky.

In House
Regular Session 1936
House Bill No. 576
Wednesday, February 5, 1936

Mr. (Clyde) Howard introduced the following bill, which was ordered to be printed and referred to the Committee on Rules, viz.: An Act establishing as a part of the primary system of highways in this Commonwealth a road leading from the Lincoln birthplace near Hodgenville to Hawesville by way of Knob Creek, Elizabethtown, Mill Creek, Big Spring, and Hardinsburg, to be known as the Lincoln Memorial Highway and to provide for marking same.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:

1. That there be established as a part of the primary system of highways of this Commonwealth a road leading from Lincoln's birthplace near Hodgenville to Hawesville by way of the Lincoln Home on Knob Creek, Elizabethtown, the home of Lincoln's mother and sister on Mill Creek, Vine Grove, Kentucky, Big Spring, Hardinsburg, Pellville to Hawesville.
2. That the State Highway Commission shall upon the request of the Lincoln Memorial Highway Commission properly mark such highways by appropriate signs.

LINCOLN MEMORIAL HIGHWAY HIGHLIGHTS*

By

LOUIS A. WARREN, LL.D.

Connects the North and the South.

Approximately 300 miles of pavement.

Western terminal in central Illinois.

Eastern terminal in central Kentucky.

Crosses two great rivers, the Ohio and the Wabash.

General direction from the eastern terminal, 55 degrees northwest.

Thirteen states of the Union within a radius of 200 miles of the terminals.

Second largest city in America less than two hundred miles from the western terminal.

Halfway station at Vincennes, but fifty miles from center of population in America.

Intersected by three great highways from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico and two of the ocean-to-ocean highways.

Straight line drawn from the western terminal through the eastern terminal would strike Cumberland Gap, the old gateway to the West.

* *Lincoln Lore*, No. 7, May 27, 1929.

